

Conscience Project Meeting Minutes, January 21, 2012

The minutes from the previous meeting 10/29/11 were reviewed and accepted. Julia was introduced. Until the recent trend in ‘unbundling’ therapies from other programmatic services to children in need of both (in consequence of which contractual arrangements might be made for therapy providers not integral to programs), Julia had conducted work in longer term treatment facilities in the form of individual, family and group therapies for children and adolescents, who often had been subject to but who had also often involved in violent and violating behaviors. She gave an account of her experiences as an ‘embedded’ therapist engaging youth in a residential program in the creation of children’s literature. She circulated examples of their works. Her account *An Expansion of Conscience Group Using Children Books & Stories* appeared in Conscience Chronicles 5-29-12.

Ethna reflected upon a meeting of a philosophical group (which she often attended on a nearby university campus) during which the subject was angels. She repeated a story that was told by a young woman in the group who was downtown on her way to hear her father perform. She encountered a homeless man, rebuffed him but reconsidered and gave him some money. His response resonated with her and elicited her own sense of gratitude and a sense of presence. He said, “If ever you need anything my pockets are full. Remember me.” There followed discussion of how human beings sometimes become angels at least for a moment when we touch.

Matt provided Ethna a recently published issue of *Psychiatric Annals* devoted to the subject of coincidences (following up on a previous issue devoted to synchronicity). Ethna indicated she would review the journal and summarize it for the group at our next meeting. John added a thought to the effect: ‘Coincidence is when the Creator chooses to be anonymous’. Ethna indicated her plans to go to Ireland in April with a copy of *Lafracoth* in hand to show persons there who would be interested. Matt said he would provide her with the illustrated *Lafracoth* on a flash drive which would be far easier to tote overseas.

Deb announced there would be a presentation and discussion of the stigma of mental illness at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) on 1/26/12. There followed considerable discussion of stigma and progress in de-stigmatization. Meg, reflecting on resistance to therapy when recommended to medical students, was put in mind of a comment she attributed to Robert Coles who she said expressed surprise when a learner conveyed reluctance to be in therapy reckoning there might be stigma attached. Coles countered that he thought therapy had been essential to him. The subject turned to persons who had provided accounts of their struggles. With respect to major depression, Matt was put in mind of William Styron’s *Darkness Made Visible: a memoir of madness*, New York: Random House, 1990.

John told of an all day conference with workshops, also to be held at CTS 2/10/12, on the provision of care to veterans and their families. John and Chaplain Clyde Angel will hold one of the workshops based on the group work they conduct with veterans. Those involved have called the group activity “Search for Meaning” and within the secular framework and setting of the VAH explore the spiritual wounds of trauma. Beulah made an inquiry of John regarding the latency between traumatic experience and help-seeking among Iraqi War veterans at the VAH. John replied that the waves of Iraqi War veterans anticipated that would be seeking help had not

yet arrived in force. John attributed this state of affairs to different factors including avoidance behaviors and the delayed emergence of symptomatology. In fact, he said, currently services were still more in demand for Viet Nam Era veterans. Beulah made additional remarks about 'the job challenged environment' to which veterans were returning and wondered whether employers might fear hiring someone with PTSD. She recalled a class at CTS on separation of church and state in which she learned about one senior vice admiral advocating spirituality tests because of an observed inverse relationship between spirituality scores and suicidality.

On February 20, 2012, John will once again be joining Meg for the senior elective in ethics at the IU School of Medicine. John thought this year he would concentrate on the role of imagination combined with spiritual elements in human beings that allow grasps of 'concepts beyond reason.' He said he would draw from comparisons to quantum mechanics (cf John's comments in our previous Conscience Project meeting 10/29/11). Deb inquired of John if he saw an alliance between imagination and intuition. John responded: "I do now since you asked." Reference was made to Ibn Arabi's *Metaphysics of Imagination*.

With respect to moral imagination, Matt indicated he had been recently acquainting himself with Martha C. Nussbaum's work by reading *Love's Knowledge: essays on philosophy and literature*, Oxford, 1990. Matt was impressed with how she had arrived, from her studies of literature (particularly novels) at much the same concepts (described in pretty much the same words) as we've relied upon in describing the domains of conscience arrived at through studies of development. Jere, who had followed Nussbaum's work for a longer time, concurred and promised to send some of her more recent contributions to Matt and Meg for their review.

Beulah said she was making progress on her thesis on the *Gospel according to Mark*. She'd been reading about metaphorical basis of cognition. She made reference to Lakoff and Johnson's work and applied it to metaphor in Mark. She had been paying particular attention to 'puns' or double meanings embedded in the seed parables in both Hebrew and Greek texts. She gave examples of use of a term that might mean 'sowing' or might mean 'scattering' as in the context of diaspora. Another example was a term figuring in the admonition not to hide one's lamp under a 'bushel' The Hebrew word translated 'bushel' might have meant either 'bed' or 'staff / rod (of oppression)' depending on the gender of the noun.

Jere reported he had updated *Conscience Chronicles*. A long term project, he said, will be working with Sue in re-designing Conscience Works (CW). Jere indicated the process of migrating materials from CW into the Digital Library (where they will be more enduring) requires a bibliographic record. Jere said Sue had suggested "Meta-thesaurus" which had been created by the NLM as a general database. Jere said he would need to cull KEYWORDS from Conscience Project participants for this project. The decision on funding his grant proposal was still pending at the time of our meeting. He also said he had recently met with Steve V to discuss a grant regarding information on services for parents with special needs children.

Meg provided a brief prospectus of the conscience sensitive tasks embedded in the aforementioned senior elective to be conducted in February. She also noted that Eric Meslin at the Center for Bioethics had become interested in the role of apology in medicine and indicated that he would be making a presentation on the subject.



Mirror of the Heart

Matt and Meg had attended one day of the two day *Symposium on Empathy* in Bloomington, In. on 11/11/11. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Study and the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions. Psychologist Nancy Eisenberg, Arizona State University, known for her work on prosocial development was featured speaker. Her plenary session was “Empathy-Related Responding in Children: Relations with Positive Moral and Social Development.” Meg attended a concurrent session which included a presentation by Keith Brown, International Studies, Brown University, entitled “Empathy –work in Wartime: Memoirs and Civilian-Military Relations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the US.” The other presentation attended by Meg was by Anelise H. Shrout, History, New York University, entitled “Distant Sufferers: Empathy and the Origins of Transnational Humanism”. In the latter presentation, the Irish potato famine 1845-47 was used as one historical event to illustrate historical studies regarding empathic responsiveness. Matt attended the concurrent session presented by Ariel Knafo and Saloman Israel and Florina Usefovsky, Psychology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem entitled “Empathy as a Core Temperamental Dimension: Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Evidence.” The other presentation was by Alicia Hofelich and Stephanie Preston, Psychology, University of Michigan entitled “Personal Representations for Emotion Mediate Empathy and Altruism”. The last session consisted of two presentations, one by Fritz Breithaupt, Germanic Studies, Indiana University was “The Dark Side of Empathy”, the other by Kevin Houser, Philosophy , Indiana University was entitled “Reasons, Suffering and Ethical Empathy

John brought back *Mirror of the Heart* painted by Deb (seen in adjacent image) to show it in the wonderful frame he had selected (seen in second image).

Deb reiterated that she conceived the work to represent creation reflected in the heart of God and hearts of people, horses given pride of place among creatures for their purity and nobility, water for the force of creation and mirror of all, for the cycles of creation, water on rocks and the sands

about them in recurrent polishing, evergreen and pine as elevations: when God looks into the mirror God sees God in all creation.



Front: Beulah. Back from left to right: Jere, Meg, Deb, Ethna, Julia and John.

Respectfully submitted,
4-08-12

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Matthew R. Galvin